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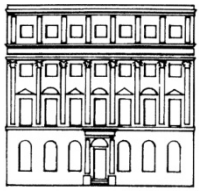

# BULLETIN

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Heimat: *Between Past and Present, Intimacy and Nightmare*
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# REVIEW ARTICLE

## HEIMAT*: BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT, INTIMACY AND NIGHTMARE*

JULIANE BRAUER

NORA KRUG, *Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum* (Munich: Penguin Verlag, 2018), 288 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978 3 328 60005 3. €28.00
FATMA AYDEMIR and HENGAMEH YAGHOOBIFARAH (eds.), *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2019), 208 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978 3 961 01036 3. €20.00
SUSANNE SCHARNOWSKI, *Heimat: Geschichte eines Missverständnisses* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2019), 272 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978 3 534 27073 6. €40.00
EDOARDO COSTADURA, KLAUS RIES, and CHRISTIANE WIESENFELDT (eds.), *Heimat global: Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019), 456 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978 3 8376 4588 0. €49.99

*Heimat* is on every tongue. Hardly a day goes by without something being written about it in the German press, and hardly a week in which a new book is not published on it. In the last eighteen months, *Heimat* has clearly become a hot topic.

This is largely because since 2017 it has become an administrative matter for the German state, in the form of the Federal Ministry of Interior, Building and Community. Yet *Heimat* is not only topical, it is also a concept of exclusion. Given that millions of human beings are on the move at the moment, having to seek new homes, *Heimat* has once again become a highly emotional and contentious term. The main reason for this is that a relationship of proximity between people and space is inscribed in the concept of *Heimat*, 'a diffuse feeling of familiarity and belonging', according to the philosopher Karin

Translated by Angela Davies (GHIL).

Joisten.[1] Notions of *Heimat* are thus private, if not intimate. *Heimat* as space can be sensed and felt by everyone individually; it has inscribed itself on all the senses: it can be tasted, smelled, heard, touched.

This initial observation is what motivated the authors of the books under review here to assess the concept of *Heimat* from their own personal or disciplinary perspectives. These publications could not be more different in form, ranging from an illustrated memory book (Nora Krug) to political essays (Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah), an academic monograph (Susanne Scharnowski), and conference proceedings in the classic form of an edited collection of essays (Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries, Christiane Wiesenfeldt), but they are similar in their concerns. On the one hand we have highly private debates with *Heimat* in the search for identity (Nora Krug; Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah), and on the other, attempts to approach the topic of *Heimat* academically from different disciplinary perspectives, with literary studies traditionally making a special contribution to the discursive assessment of *Heimat* (Susanne Scharnowski; Edoardo Costadura et al.). The publications under review here read as if they are struggling to find a sober, unemotional concept of *Heimat*, while themselves demonstrating that it cannot operate rationally between being a sentimental feeling of safety and a nightmare.

In 2018 Penguin Verlag in Germany published what is certainly the most unusual approach to *Heimat* in the form of 'a German family album' (the subtitle of the book) by the author and illustrator Nora Krug (who describes herself as a 'homesick emigrant'). In a mixture of hand-written texts, drawings, facsimiles of documents, letters, and historical photographs the author, who emigrated to the USA sixteen years ago, documents her highly personal search for her German identity. Readers can follow the author, born in 1977, in her forensic investigation of every trace of her family history. None of the almost 300 pages resembles any of the others. The book is worth reading because of the originality of its design and the careful historical research alone. It is no coincidence that it has won several prizes,

[1] Karen Joisten, 'Heimat und Heimatlosigkeit: Philosophische Perspektiven', in Jürgen Manemann and Werner Schreer (eds.), *Religion und Migration heute: Perspektiven – Positionen – Projekte* (Regensburg, 2012), 215–26.

especially for design. And numerous nominations, among others, for the German Children's Literature Award, support the view that this is far more than a private survey of notions of *Heimat*. It is, in fact, an especially successful textbook of twentieth-century German history.

While this quest for German identity and the author's *Heimat* is highly original, it is also entirely typical of German family histories of the twentieth century. Essentially, this illustrated album of fifteen chapters, which, in its intimacy, is also reminiscent of a colourful scrapbook or diary, constantly circles around the question of German feelings of *Heimat* in the shadow of the guilt of grandfathers and grandmothers during the Nazi period, and of the third generation's 'feeling of German guilt'. 'Every time I went abroad as a teenager, my guilt travelled with me', observes the author in the introduction, 'as though our history was swimming in our blood'.[2] This quasi-genetic definition of German *Heimat* as somewhere between a longing for identity and a shameful covering up of one's origins led to an almost compulsive working through of her own family's history. And logically, the author's search for her own Germanness only began from abroad. Thus *Heimat* is understood as a perspectival concept, that is, suggesting that home can best be recognized from a distance, when one has left it behind.

Right from the first chapter, it is clear that this is a West German family album. Having grown up in Karlsruhe, near an American military airfield, Krug and her struggles with the history of National Socialism in the 1980s are not typically German, as the book suggests, but typically West German. 'My *Heimat* is an echo: an incomprehensible reverberation.' With this feeling of uncertainty, she begins 'digging', and 'digging deeper', for culpable entanglements in her own family. For Krug makes the question of whether or not her German attachment to *Heimat* can function as a construct of identity, as a safe space, depend essentially on the of issue of guilt. Her quest circles around two central figures in her family. One is her father's brother, who went to the front at the age of 17, and died in Italy at the age of 18. Krug's father grew up in his dead brother's shadow, and experienced a typical West German childhood in a family torn apart by grief for their fallen first-born son. The second-born son, regarded as 'running wild', was ignored and given little love. It was only as a

[2] The book has no page numbering. Quotations translated by Angela Davies.

result of his daughter's researches that the father managed to reconcile with his family.[3] The second main person in the story is Willi, her maternal grandfather, a driving instructor from Karlsruhe. The author digs deep into the questions of his complicity with, involvement in, and knowledge of, the exclusion, persecution, and annihilation of the Jewish population, and also of the part played by his home town of Kühlsheim. Krug creates an intimacy which is almost painfully intense with these two figures from her family history by constantly bridging the time gap imaginatively, thinking herself back into the 1940s, or inviting the deceased to take part in fictional conversations. This approach is exhausted only when she has sifted through all the archival material and spoken with all family members or distant acquaintances: 'I will not be able to get any closer.' Thus Krug can put an end to her search.

The 'notebook of a homesick emigrant' draws on a specific ambivalence: on the one hand, on the stereotypes and clichés of what counts as typically German, such as Hansaplast (a brand of sticking plasters), mushroom picking, Leitz binders, Christmas trees, forests, Struwwelpeter, and not least the story of guilt and entanglement. On the other hand, the hunt for clues shows the extent to which *Heimat* is, in fact, a highly intimate and fragile construction of identity which, ultimately, cannot be created only by offsetting historical guilt, pain, and shame.

The book appeared on the American and British markets with a slight delay. Interestingly, the changes made in the American edition are more far-reaching than in the British. The most striking one is the choice of a new title: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*.[4] The term 'belonging' at first glance captures the essence of Krug's quest more clearly than the historically multi-dimensional and politically charged concept of *Heimat*. In the end, the reader is left with the impression that Krug is more concerned about belonging and identity than *Heimat* as such. The term 'reckons', however, offers an interpretation that German readers are left to make for them-

[3] In this respect, this typical story is reminiscent of Uwe Timm, *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (Cologne, 2003).

[4] Both English-language editions were published in October 2018, three months after the German original. The American edition is entitled: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home* (Scribner), while the British edition is published under the title *Heimat: A German Familiy Album* (Particular Books).

selves. The non-German language editions do not contain all the facsimile documents reproduced in the original edition. Instead, translations are stuck over the original German documents like hand-written notes. The edition for the British market translates the title simply as *Heimat: A German Family Album*. We can only speculate about the reasons for this, but it underlines a fundamental feature of the concept of *Heimat*. In German, this term generates complex associations and emotions, while in other languages, several words are often required to capture the various levels of meaning it contains. This places the concept of *Heimat* right at the centre of political debates.

The political essays and commentaries on the current situation in the volume *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum* are no less private, but much more polarizing. Because the term *Heimat* is so strongly emotionalized in Germany and provides an argument for right-wing populist and racist strategies of exclusion and inclusion, the editors, Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, a writer and a newspaper editor, felt called upon to publish this volume. It is not only the title that is provocative. In their diversity, the fourteen contributors represent a cross-section of German immigrant groups. Most were born in Germany, and are thus members of second or third generation immigrant families. Others, however, were children when they went to Germany with their parents. Their family roots are in Turkey, Korea, Italy, Poland, or Russia. What the contributors share, apart from the experience of being at home in several places, is the experience of exclusion, which again and again makes it difficult for them to see Germany as a potential home.

The design of the book cover already points to this fundamental problem. The words 'Eure' (your) and 'unser' (our) are set so inconspicuously, merging into the background colour of the cover, that it is easy to read the title, at first glance, as *Heimat ist Albtraum* (*Heimat* is a nightmare). It is this personal and at the same time fundamental experience of exclusion at many levels of everyday life that connects the essays. Experiences of exclusion—at school, at university, at the pub, and in the neighbourhood—on the basis of appearance or language are both typical and varied. The fourteen contributors circle around their personal *Heimat* nightmare with varying degrees of implacability. Each essay has a one-word title; taken together, they map out the co-ordinates of *Heimat* as an exclusion zone. They include terms such as *Sichtbar* (visible), *Blicke* (glances), *Beleidigung*

(insult), *Gefährlich* (dangerous), and *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (coping with the present), standing for what makes people uneasy with the notion of *Heimat*, as well as *Vertrauen* (trust), *Liebe* (love), *Zuhause* (home), *Zusammen* (together). Each of the essays deals with the question of whose *Heimat* is being talked about, and whose nightmare is the result.

A good example is the essay 'Beleidigung' by Enrico Ippolito, arts editor of an online news website. He reports on the 'small', everyday racist words and comments that formed part of his childhood and youth, at school, at the job centre, on talk shows, at the pub with friends. These experiences make him particularly sensitive and aware. Racism structures his perceptions and his thinking, and he himself must put up with being asked whether he is racist (p. 99–100). This parade of everyday experiences makes it clear how such practices of inclusion and exclusion can have a negative impact on social interaction, right into the private sphere. It becomes clear that the question of what is and is not racist is assessed differently, depending on whether one is a member of a minority or a majority in society.

The cover design also points to the second central message of the book: the pronouns 'your' and 'our' make all the difference, because the nightmare arises out of the clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. With their sometimes provocative language and arguments, these contributions make clear that precisely this distinction is ambivalent. On the one hand, the authors' personal reports document structural, everyday racism, thus explaining what makes it so difficult for them to experience Germany as a *Heimat* and a place of safety. On the other hand, there is a reproach in the constant construction of those who cannot see Germany as a *Heimat*, the 'marginalized groups, as 'us', and all the others as 'them'. The editors insist that 'all readers must decide for themselves' whether they want to live in a racist society, or in one that values tolerance and diversity (p. 10). Yet some readers may get the impression that they cannot always choose to decide where the 'us' ends and the 'them' begins (p. 10), for example, when the essays present being German as the norm, as in statements such as: 'many Germans cannot do much with the ideas of inappropriate, intrusive behaviour, or respect' (p. 81). It could certainly be argued at this point that these are personal experiences of exclusion, which are themselves based on undifferentiated general-

izations made about marginalized groups. Yet such statements could also have the potential to prevent, rather than promote, a productive confrontation.

The authors' variety of experience makes it worth reading and considering what they present as the co-ordinates of *Heimat*. Essays such as Max Czollek's 'Gegenwartsbewältigung' invite the reader to see the 'integration paradigm' (p. 173) as a 'system error of open societies'. The fact that a certain section of society decides who is German, and who has to be integrated, represents anything but an offer from Germany to provide a new *Heimat*. The essay by Sharon Dodua Otoo, winner of the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize, on 'Liebe' makes us thoughtful. She reports how she tried to get her children to behave as unobtrusively as possible, so that they would not stand out as black in a white majority society. Yet her teenage son taught her to call out everyday racism confidently, to fight it, and not simply to accept it. Along with him, she learned that a home is a place 'that I have fought for. I fought so that I could feel good about calling Berlin my home' (p. 68).

In principle, the contributions to this volume show that what can and cannot, what should and should not, be *Heimat* is highly relevant. It does not help, however, to use the politically and emotionally contested term in order to enter the arena oneself. But it does help to recount memories, based on many diverse experiences, that show that home is never simply a place that is given, but a space that everyone has to conquer for themselves.

The differentiation between space and emotions is precisely the focus of Susanne Scharnowski's book. Its main concern is to explain the history of the term *Heimat* as the 'story of a misunderstanding'. To this end, the philologist selects a literary history approach. She argues consistently that *Heimat* should be understood not as an emotion, but as a place that needs to be shaped, and is changed by this process. The aim of her readable book is to enlighten her readers about the 'misunderstanding' that *Heimat* is a feeling, and to demystify the term. This aim is understandable given the highly emotionally charged current debate about *Heimat*. Scharnowski argues that the term *Heimat* will only be productive and acceptable in social policy contexts again when it is separated from feelings. According to the author, 'misunderstandings about *Heimat* mostly come about because of a narrowing or distortion of perspectives, the simplifica-

tion or suppression of facts, and the confusion of terms' (p. 10). In the first five chapters of her chronologically structured book, Scharnowski traces the (mis)understanding of the 'key word' (p. 12) *Heimat* from the Romantic period to the 1950s. She does this on the basis of literary and philosophical texts, manifestos, and newspaper and journal articles. Her most important finding from the evaluation of these sources is that 'even the German *Heimat* has much less to do with nation and state than is often assumed'. Rather, it is 'an antonym of progress and modernity' (p. 15).

The first part, in particular, impresses with the clarity of its argument. One reason, perhaps, is that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the concept of *Heimat* can be more clearly grasped than in the post-war history of the two Germanies. In her re-reading of the literary sources, in particular, the author demonstrates exactly how, in the nineteenth century, *Heimat* was used as a spatial concept, and that it was much less emotionally charged than is so often claimed (p. 19). From the Romantic period, via the pre-March (*Vormärz*) to the turn of the century and the Nazi period, the author traces the changing understanding of *Heimat*, from a specific place that one leaves, misses, and to which one returns (in the figure of the wanderer and the emigrant), to a political term in the era of nation-building (p. 35), a rallying cry in the face of progress and modernization (p. 55), an ideology (as the result of its indissoluble attachment to the nation) (p. 79), and part of the Nazi *Lebensraum* argument (p. 98).

The analysis is convincing because of the clarity of its structure, its linguistic dexterity and precision, and the combination of a discursive account with a broad source base, which give the reader eye-opening insights and much food for thought. It contains many statements that one would like to quote again and again, such as: '*Heimat* functioned as a link and mediator between the individual and society as well as between the individual and the state, as a layer at once protective and limiting' (p. 22).

The second part of the book has a temporal and regional focus on social and political developments from the 1960s to the present day. Although the aim is to present a post-war history of Germany, the account of the German Democratic Republic is brief and schematic, while the Federal Republic of Germany is presented in the usual breadth, drawing on numerous media, such as film and television series, photographs, advertisements, and travel guides. The chapter

'Heimat in Trümmern: Alte und neue Heimat in West und Ost' (*Heimat* in Ruins: Old and New *Heimat* in West and East) shows that despite the breadth of sources it draws upon, the account is not historical and remains superficial (because of its cursory style). Thus the author comes to the conclusion that, despite the 'conservative' postwar mood, an 'unconditional turn towards the new and the future' prevailed in the early years of the Federal Republic. At this point, it would certainly have been useful to take note of the historical research on the future that is available for the history of the Federal Republic in particular.[5] With regard to nostalgia and homesickness, historiography can also provide findings that clearly go further than this definition used by the author: 'Nostalgia, on the other hand, is considered as a sugar-coated type of memory that is accompanied by sentimental feelings, in which the memory is transfigured, idealized'(p. 143).[6]

Even if it is apparent where the author identifies the misunderstanding, the concept of *Heimat* cannot entirely dispense with 'feeling'. This becomes clear when she explains that everything that is perceived as fragile and threatened by modernization and social change is bundled together into the concept of *Heimat*: 'Tradition, comfort, community, attachment, stability, closeness, security, familiarity, harmony' (p. 15).

At the end of this entertaining read, one concludes that *Heimat* is neither exclusively a place nor exclusively an emotional attitude, but both. Although it is clear that the author's motivation in writing this book is fed by the current emotional debate on *Heimat*, feelings cannot be excised from the concept, even with a glance at history, because places are also spaces for individual negotiation and appropriation of life, and therefore full of feelings. This, incidentally, is also the conclusion drawn by the author: '*Heimat* is not just a business location, a place of employment, or a market place, but a place with a socio-cultural dimension, and a carrier of emotional significance' (p. 235). In this sense, the plea with which she finishes the book is con-

[5] Most recently, Joachim Radkau, *Geschichte der Zukunft: Prognosen, Visionen, Irrungen in Deutschland von 1945 bis heute* (Munich, 2017).

[6] e.g. Tobias Becker, 'Rückkehr der Geschichte? Die "Nostalgie-Welle" in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren', in Fernando Esposito (ed.), *Zeitenwandel: Transformationen geschichtlicher Zeitlichkeit nach dem Boom* (Göttingen, 2017), 93–117.

sistent, if not new. She calls for the either–or attitude of 'either cosmopolitanism or isolation' (p. 235) to be overcome. The responsibility for shaping a place into a *Heimat* lies in the hands of everyone. Thus it remains a matter of feeling, but not exclusively.

The edited volume of collected essays, *Heimat global: Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, too, faces the challenge of assessing *Heimat* as a place, a space, and a feeling, and thus fits very well with the other books under review here. The volume goes back to an international conference entitled 'Heimat: Ein Problem der globalisierten Welt', which was held in September 2017 at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, and reads as a sequel to the volume *Heimat gestern und heute: Interdisziplinäre Perspektive*, put together by almost the same team of editors in 2016.[7]

Like almost all the other books on *Heimat*, this one grows out of a feeling of unease with the current debates on *Heimat*. This interdisciplinary volume has a double aim, namely, 'to cast light on today's debate about *Heimat*, and to provide a few answers to questions that arise out of this debate' (p. 13), but only under the proviso that '*Heimat* is to be nostalgia-free, that is, it is to be considered operationally and with historical awareness' (p. 21). The explicit aim of this academic and de-emotionalizing look at *Heimat* is 'to encourage a new, global concept of *Heimat*' (p. 33).

Consisting of nineteen essays by literary scholars, political scientists, sociologists, legal scholars, Germanists, historians, scholars of religious studies, Romanists, architects, musicologists, and folklorists, the volume represents a considerable interdisciplinary breadth. The essays are grouped into four areas, which essentially correspond to the volume's subtitle: Models (I. Historical and Political Semantics; II. The Hermeneutics of World Relations), Practices (III. Shaping *Heimat*), and Media of Constructing *Heimat* (IV. Mediatized and Narrated *Heimat*).

The first two areas in particular offer a variety of concepts of *Heimat* from different disciplines, which are similar in that they draw upon historical genealogies of *Heimat* for their arguments relating to the present. Most of the contributions agree that the 'ideologically charged, anti-modernist, late nineteenth-century understanding of

[7] Edoardo Costadura and Klaus Ries (eds.), *Heimat gestern und heute: Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* (Bielefeld, 2016).

*Heimat*', to which the concept of 'nation' attached itself, has a certain appeal again today (not only) among right-wing populist circles. This 'Janus-face of the national' (Benjamin-Immanuel Hoff and Konstanze Gerling-Zedler, p. 61) retained its effectiveness throughout the twentieth century in various German political contexts, as an excursus on the GDR view of '*Heimat* as a Substitute for the Nation' (p. 62) shows. Based on these historical insights, the authors call for *Heimat* today to be seen as a 'universal space of opportunity' (p. 70).

The essay by folklorist Friedemann Schmoll is also about ambivalences. Drawing on historical examples, he shows that '*Heimat* regularly presents itself as mental machinery to defend a sphere that is both caring and militant' (p. 83). With this potential, *Heimat* can function as a 'stabilizer of crises' at times of upheaval and 'social erosion processes' (p. 99), but with the ambivalent inclusion and exclusion mechanisms mentioned above. This, too, underlines the extent to which an understanding of *Heimat* that is more than 100 years old is finding applications today. The literary scholar Werner Nell also stresses the potentially dangerous ambivalence of the historical concept of *Heimat* by linking it with typologies of violence. In his view, violence 'can be seen as a medium that can create or destroy *Heimat* in the internal sphere; similarly, from outside, it can be seen as enabling, endangering, producing, or destroying *Heimat*' (p. 135).

The sociologist Hartmut Rosa presents a highly convincing conceptual proposal for an alternative concept of *Heimat*, from which these ambivalences have been removed. Based on the concept he has developed of 'Resonanz als Weltbeziehung' (resonance as a relationship with the world), he sees *Heimat* as a specific 'world relationship . . . a particular way of relating to the world . . . Thus *Heimat* is the hope or promise of entering into a resonance relationship with the world' (p. 153). The convincing basic idea is that resonance is not appropriation, but assimilation (p. 168). This means that the resonance relationship between people and space always has to be reciprocal: space must touch (affect) people; then people respond to it (emotion). This results in the transformation of both. Space can become *Heimat*, but does not necessarily have to as, Rosa argues, resonance cannot be forced and is, therefore, 'unavailable' (p. 162). The psychologist Beate Mitzscherlich argues in a similar vein when she defines coming to feel at home (*Beheimatung*) as an 'active' but also

individual process. Thus *Heimat* is a utopia; fundamentally, the goal is to have a chance to rebuild the world as *Heimat* (p. 194).

The contributions on practice and media of constructing *Heimat* could clearly have profited from these exemplary concepts of *Heimat*. Unfortunately, the conceptual weakness of the volume is revealed in the rest of the essays. It collects the contributions to the conference, thus documenting it, but it does not tie them together. Nonetheless, the insights from practice are illuminating and definitely worth reading, for example, the essay by architect Peter Cachola Schmal about the exhibition 'Making *Heimat*'. The lack of theoretical reflection, however, makes itself painfully felt in the statement: 'Making *Heimat* emphasizes making: it means that "new" Germans have to make an active effort to create a new *Heimat* for themselves. "Old" Germans, on the other hand, who are already there, have to make an effort to acknowledge that the new ones are trying. The process of creating *Heimat* requires an active effort on both sides' (p. 325). This conclusion is problematic to the extent that, without considering any conceptual theories, it sees *Heimat* as normative and hegemonic, rather than as representing the possibility of assimilation from both sides.

The essays in section IV: Mediatized and Narrated *Heimat* are, similarly, worth reading and successful to different extents. In her contribution 'Preserving *Heimat*', the musicologist Yvonne Wasserloos explains that *Heimat* can appear as threatened and worth preserving in a specific aesthetic of music, which succeeds mainly through the monumentality of the sound of 'proper' music (p. 374).

On the whole, the volume leaves an ambivalent impression. It contains thematic contributions (mostly hidden behind misleading headings), that one would otherwise not find. Of particular note is a very good account of the history of the subject of German area studies (*Heimatkunde*) in the essay: 'Schools "Maintain Ties with *Heimat* in Thuringia and Germany"', by Gregor Reimann, Sophie Seher, and Michael Wermke. The 'thoughtful reflections' of the historian Justus H. Ulbricht on local patriotism, populism, and xenophobia in Saxony are also very illuminating. Here we find references to 'a loss of trust in the course of the *Wende*' (p. 137), and the feeling of a loss of *Heimat* in one's own home (p. 139) in order to explain specific developments in Saxony without excusing them. Finally, Ulbricht comes to the conclusion that *Heimat* is thought of as exclu-

sionary, and he therefore decides that the term can no longer really be used. The basic problem, however, is that this does not do justice to the 'existential value of *Heimat* in the soul of many fellow human beings' (p. 145).

To this extent, the basic aim of the volume, namely, to pluralize and globalize the concept of *Heimat*, is right; but it hardly happens in practice. In total, the contributions add up to an exercise in German navel-gazing. The global perspective is rarely in evidence, mainly in the essay on space by Franz Eckhardt. Apart from this, when terms such as *Gemütlichkeit* (cosiness), *Weihnachtsbaum* (Christmas tree), *Geborgenheit* (a feeling of safety), *Weihnachtsabend* (Christmas Eve), and *Heimatfest* (local festival) are discussed in relation to *Heimat*, German history is always used as a reference point in the quest to measure German souls. Ultimately, the aim is to get to the bottom of specific East German experiences. This is actually something that the book achieves, even if the introduction, which was undifferentiated in this respect, does not lead us to expect it. We read there that feelings of a loss of *Heimat* in the East are 'paradoxical' because a transfigured and identity-creating GDR *Heimat*, which never existed in this form, was created after the event (p. 17).

In sum, therefore, the volume offers surprises. But only rarely, and mainly in the conceptual part of the book, does it fulfil the promise made in its title of doing justice to *Heimat* globally. What reading these very different approaches to *Heimat* shows is, above all, that many of the questions posed in the book are by no means new, for example, who has a claim to what *Heimat*, and what practices of inclusion and exclusion, or strategies of (re)appropriation or refusal of *Heimat* say in view of the history of the twentieth century. What is new, however, is that the concept of *Heimat* is the topic of highly emotional discussion in public discourse. Enough reasons for this can be found in the books reviewed here. In its German meaning, *Heimat* seems to refer to a space of belonging much more than to a place where one is allowed to be. This wealth of meaning makes the term so untranslatable, explosive, fragile, and contested. This intense connection between people and their *Heimat* gives rise to a whole series of conflicting feelings of *Heimat*: love and fear of loss, feelings of familiarity and belonging as well as xenophobia, but also feelings of alienation. And, not least, wanderlust and homesickness. Emotion makes talking about *Heimat* complicated, especially at a time when it

is used for political purposes. These books demonstrate that we cannot get away from it, but they make equally clear that we should now be aware of this.

JULIANE BRAUER is a Researcher in the Centre for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. She studied history and musicology, and completed her *Habilitation* in 2019 on feelings of time in divided Germany.